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# Report of the Medical Officer of Health, to the Thirsk Rural Sanitary Authority for the Year 1893.

Gentlemen

In accordance with my duty I now desire to place before you my Annual Report of the Health of the Thirsk Sanitary Area.

It will be seen from the accompanying Tables that the total number of Deaths is 221, of which 117 are of Males, and 104 of Females; this constitutes an Annual Deathrate of 18·13 per thousand of the population according to the Census of 1891.

The Births registered during the year, have been, of Males 160, of Females 163, = 323; being at the rate of 26·50 per thousand of the population.

I have made no estimate for increase as it is questionable whether any real increase is taking place now, any more than in the last decade.

Concerning the conditions affecting the Health of the District we find that there have been 323 Notifications of Infectious Diseases during the Year; to which might be added a large but uncertain number of unnotified cases of Influenza which have contributed their quota to the Bills of Mortality, and in other ways influenced adversely the health of the people.

In like manner Diarrhoea might be added; which became prevalent as a consequence of the unusual summer season. It seemed to arise as the great heat declined, and was apparently epidemic, affecting all parts of the District pretty much alike. The Deaths from it were chiefly of Infants, from three to thirteen

The Notified cases of Infectious Disease have been distributed according to the following Table

| | Whooping Cough | Scarlatina | Measles | Erysipelas | Typhoid | Diphtheria | Cramp | Small Pox | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thirsk | 5 | 43 | 30 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 98 |
| Sowerby | | 8 | | 8 | 6 | 5 | 1 | | 28 |
| Thirsk Junction | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | 2 |
| Carlton Miniott | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Sandhutton | 36 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | 41 |
| Breckonborough | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Newsham | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Kirby Wiske | 9 | | 29 | 1 | | | | | 39 |
| South Kilvington | | | | | 5 | | | | 5 |
| Topcliffe | | 8 | | | | | | | 8 |
| Melbeck | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Skipton | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Dalton Moor | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Sessay | 3 | | | | | | | | 3 |
| Sutton | | 19 | | 1 | | | | | 20 |
| Thirlby | | 2 | | | | | | | 2 |
| Felixkirk | 3 | | | | 1 | | | | 4 |
| Thirkleby | 2 | 1 | | | | | | | 3 |
| Thrayton | 24 | 1 | 3 | | | | | | 28 |
| Brawith | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Thornborough | | 1 | | | | | | | 1 |
| Ulpsall | 2 | | 1 | | | | | | 3 |
| Boltby | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 4 |
| Hepworth | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Thornton-le-Moor | 12 | 3 | 3 | | | | | | 18 |
| Maunby | 6 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 8 |
| Total | 105 | 89 | 72 | 18 | 17 | 15 | 6 | 1 | 323 |

months old, or of persons nearing the other extreme of life.

See Table 6.

Whooping Cough, Scarlatina, and Measles seemed to have gradually swept round the District being undoubtedly transmitted by Contact.

In regard to Scarlatina, the mildness of the disease may be inferred from the fact that there has been no death from it during the year. This very feature of mildness has contributed materially to its spread, as it seems very certain that a large number of cases have escaped not only notification but notice; the symptoms being of too slight a nature to require observation but still powerful enough to spread the disease.

In consequence of the prevalence of Scarlatina in Sutton it was considered necessary to close the village School for a time, and in Kirby Wiske the School had to be closed for a period of three weeks owing to the great prevalence of Measles in that part of the District.

Typhoid = In the latter part of April a case of this disease was notified at the north end of South Shilvington which was apparently of very short duration, the person dying within eight days. There was no local ~~insanitary~~ condition discoverable, and the subject being a Miller's waggoner, might have contracted the disease at any point within his rounds.

In July a case occurred at a Farmhouse near Felixkirk, the subject being a girl who had returned from service in Brafferton with the disease upon her.

In August, a case was reported at Thirsk Junction

New Cottages, where the Sanitary surroundings are good, and the Thirsk watersupply in use.

In the beginning of October a Case of Typhoid appeared in Sandhutton. The subject, a girl, had been visiting in Northallerton and returned home ill.

On the 6th of October a case of Typhoid was reported in the South end of South Thilvington. At this part of the village the drain which carries part of the roadway water was found to be blocked in front of the houses. The well on the premises was dry, and that on the adjoining premises was found to be contaminated owing to the blocked drain, and probably also from the proximity of an ashpit which was foul and wet. The drains here were opened out, the ashpit has been reconstructed and covered, and the well has been opened and cleaned out.

On the 11th October the unmarried brother of this last case, who lived near the centre of the village, was reported ill, and both cases died. Then the child of the first person became ill, and also a young girl who had been assisting in the house.

In November, a case of doubtful Typhoid occurred in Victory Row, at the ~~South~~ end, and in the early part of December a case was reported at the North end of the Lane Row.

As this latter case was that of an Employé of the N. E. Railway who travelled between Leeds and Hartlepool, its origin might be considered as doubtful. The watersupply to this Row is derived from two wells, which were dug in the gardens within the last few years.

Being in cultivated land neither of the supplys is good, some of the tenants preferring to get their supply from other sources.

In November a case of Typhoid commencing as Influenza was reported in Dalton Moor, the subject being a railway signalman. The ashpit for the premises in which the case occurred was in a very filthy condition, and very near the dwelling.

In December, a case of fever was reported in St James's Green, where the Thirsk watersupply was in use, but where the ashpit was in an indifferent state of cleanliness.

About the same time cases of Fever appeared in Little Sowerby, five being reported before the close of the Year. In this locality two or three very wet and foul ashpits and privies exist, to which a large number of people have to resort. One of these ashpits which adjoined the wall of a dwelling has been reconstructed, and others are being altered and covered in. An old tile drain is said, also to exist in this part of the Lane, of which, much complaint is made, especially in summer. It ought certainly to be attended to and relaid. The watersupply here is obtained from the public well in the Square. Examination of this water shows that while it is ~~not~~ pure, the condition is better than when the analysis was made in 1890.

Diphtheria = In September this disease appeared in Thirsk, and two speedily fatal cases occurred, one in Bateman's, and one in Coltman's Yard.

The Analyses of the wellwater in these yards show a high degree of pollution necessitating the recommendation to have the wells closed for

drinking purposes at once.

A non-fatal case occurred at a farm near Skipton-on-Swale. The most probable cause being an old, dirty, and most insanitary set of outoffices. These have since been entirely reconstructed.

In October, cases of Diphtheria appeared in Thirsk in Kirkgate, Beckside, Biggin's Yard, Long Street, Sowerby Grange, South Terrace, and Mowbray Place. In some of these localities the drainage and ashpits were defective, but in others no probable local cause was apparent. It might be a question however, whether these, as well as the Croupose Cases had not some connection with the Scarlatinal prevalence.

On the 20th of June a case of Smallpox appeared in Thirsk, the subject being a German Bandsman who, apparently had been travelling about the country with the eruption out upon him for five days. He was removed from the lodging-house where he had slept, to the Workhouse Infectious Hospital; the bedding upon which he had slept was destroyed; the room which he had occupied was shut up and well fumigated, and the clothing of his companions were carefully disinfected. No other case appeared as a consequence of this one.

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Concerning the question of the two wells in Mowbray Place and Belgrave Terrace which has been under the consideration of the Sanitary Authority for some time, it may be noted that these waters were pronounced to be contaminated in February 1892, the alleged cause being the laying of a new drain along the lane, in which they are situated, which

had disturbed the existing drainage and so fouled the wells. At that time my advice was, that the property owners be strongly urged by the Sanitary Authority to adopt the Town's Supply. Since then the repeated analyses have shown that in spite of attempts to improve their surroundings, the quality of of the waters in both wells has been deteriorating instead of improving. The proprietors have not been disposed to accept the suggestion that the Towns Supply should be laid on, but have obtained their supply partly from Miss Cooplands and partly from Mrs Jolls' private wells, both of which they considered were within reasonable distance. The Sanitary Authority have obtained an analysis of each of these well waters, and to this analysis has been appended the opinion of the Analyst in the one case "that the water is contaminated and unfit for drinking purposes" and in the other that "the water is not suitable for drinking purposes but that the organic impurity is within the limits found in fair drinking waters."

As a matter of fact these wells belong to houses which have been used as private schools for a generation, and no complaint of illness has ever been made in connection with these Schools, but on the contrary it is stated, and it is within my own personal knowledge as well, that pupils coming from a distance have almost invariably improved in health during their residence here.

The waters are hard as all waters are in this District but I am not aware of any general tendency to disturbance of health on that account in any part of the Sanitary Area.

As regards the organic impurity I have endeavoured to make some comparison by taking an Analysis of the Leeds Watersupply in the Matter of Ammonia and Organic Ammonia and arranging it along with the waters in question. thus.

| | Ammonia | Organic Ammonia |
|---|---|---|
| Leeds Watersupply | 0.0014 | 0.0039 |
| Mr. Jolls well | 0.0005 | 0.0014 |
| Mrs Cooplands well | 0.0039 | 0.0039 |
| Belgrave Terrace well | 0.0932 | 0.0089 |
| Mowbray Place well | 0.1075 | 0.0140 |

It will thus be seen that Mr. Jolls well compares most favourably with, while Mrs Cooplands well is exactly equal to, the Leeds supply in Organic Ammonia, although her well is but a short distance from the contaminated waters. This seems to show that the contaminating causes of the affected supplies are very local, and in all probability the results of the defective condition of the drainage and ashpits, and to some little extent also probably from the wretched condition of the roadway of the lane. If conditions such as these are the active influences at work, considerable force is added to the consideration which I have so often sought to impress upon the Authority that their true duty is to obtain by every means open to them an improved condition of every ashpit, and of every sink, gulley, and contributory drain.
All ashpits should be small, level with the ground, well cemented, and covered from the rain.
The contents ought to be frequently and completely removed, but this object will never be thoroughly

obtained until the Authority take the matter under their own control.

Concerning the Means of Prevention of Infectious Diseases within the District, while the Notification Act has been adopted, no provision whatever has been made for dealing with the Cases reported, either by Isolation Hospital, or by apparatus for the proper disinfection of infected Material.

Notification of Whooping Cough and Measles could well have been spared for a time at least, as it has been in other places, while the cost already almost uselessly expended would have gone a long way towards the procuring of a really efficient disinfecting apparatus.

Concerning the ordinary Sanitary Work of the District during the Year, the Nuisance Inspector reports that =

20 privies and ashpits have been repaired, Covered and Cemented.
30 Middens and accumulations of offensive Matters removed
27 Private drains have been attended to.
20 Township Drains repaired and Cleaned.
18 Watersupplies have been attended to.
Fever Cases have been attended to and supplied with Disinfectants &c.

Signed
John H Buchanan. M.D.
Medical Officer of Health
Thirsk
18th February 1894

EDITOR
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